THE ULTIMATE DRAGON WARRIORS ZINE

CASKET OF FAYS

ISSUE TEN

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Chief Editor: Simon Barns

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A Tribute to Russ Nicholson

Dave Morris

Russ Nicholson is probably best known to gamers from his work on The Warlock of Firetop Mountain, the Warlock boardgame, and Fiend Folio. I helped out with playtesting Warlock at Games Workshop and remember gazing in rapture over the gorgeously glossy spell cards with Russ's precise and evocative artwork. Few artists would even begin to know what to do with concepts like invisibility or flight, but Russ was a real magician.

Years before gamebooks existed, at least in Britain, Russ's art had been appreciated by the cognoscenti in Stephen Jones's and David Sutton's semi-prozine Fantasy Tales. That's where I became a fan. When I started my own writing career it was Stephen Jones who kindly gave me Russ's address in Papua New Guinea. We corresponded, and I got Russ's pictures into my books despite the reluctance of publishers, who were alarmed at the thought of a package of illustrations falling out of a boat or getting sent via the Tuvalu post office and leaving them with twenty blank pages.

Even at a distance of 9000 miles with weeks between letters (he was often upcountry) it was a delight to work with Russ. I looked forward to getting his pictures because he was one of those artists who always improved on what you'd hoped for. Often he improved it a lot. The meteor stalker in Blood Sword book 2, the street scenes for Dragon Warriors, the cast of desperadoes in Heart of Ice, the fillers that brought the Fabled Lands to life.

Before all the wizards and dragons, Russ had been an illustrator of girls' comics in the '70s (Misty, I think) and I always hoped we'd get a comics project off the ground. I introduced him to David Fickling when The DFC

was being planned. He did some wonderful sample pages for them – various strips including Philip Pullman's utterly unfilmable John Blake stories and a science fantasy saga called Kingdom of Feathers. He also drew part of a Mirabilis one-shot that The DFC was going to place in The Guardian. Russ had taught art to Sean Phillips, longtime collaborator with Ed Brubaker, but still somehow The DFC failed to hire him. (Considering the fate of most of the strips involved in the comic, maybe he dodged a bullet there.)

I worked with him on a pitch for an interactive graphic novel and on adaptations of Camelot Eclipsed and Frankenstein's Legions. We even toyed with a comics prequel to Heart of Ice starring Chaim Golgoth. For Jamie Thomson he blocked out a comic book version of The Heart of Harkun radio play. But none of those projects quite came off. As far as publishers were concerned, Russ was the gamebook guy and he was never able to escape that gravity well.

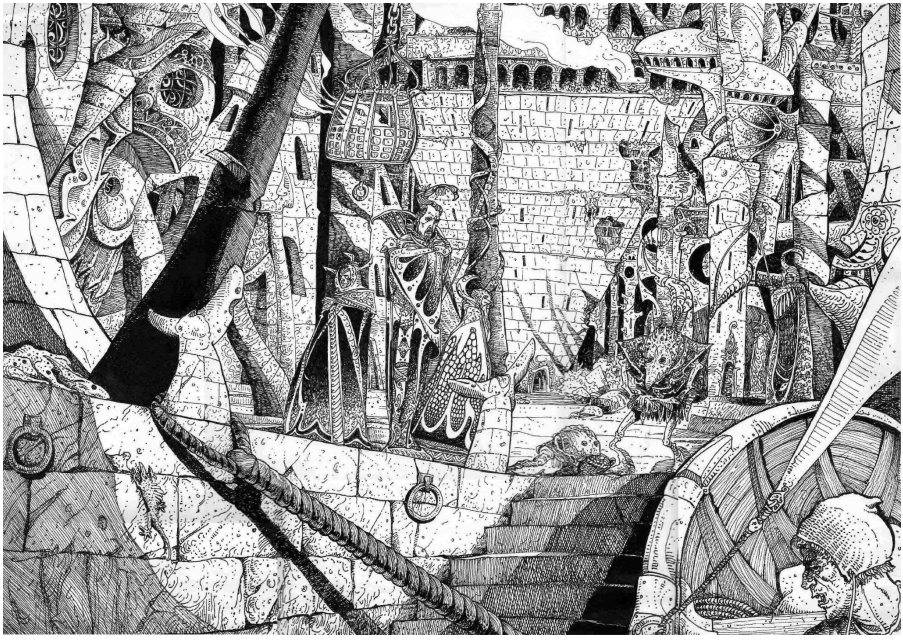
When he got back from Papua New Guinea we finally met up in person, became firm friends, and from then on it was always a pleasure to have projects that gave us an excuse to settle down to regular long phone conversations and occasionally getting together at conventions or publisher meetings. Once he was back in Britain it became easier to set up those projects, and his art can be seen going from strength to strength on the Blood Sword and Fabled Lands series.

Returning to civilization wasn't the end of his struggles with art directors, who were prone to mislaying his original art and who could have him pulling his hair out with their weathervane demands. There was the art director at Mammoth who, spotting a Maya child in one of the street scenes for Necklace of Skulls, decided that it was racist and insisted that he keep Tipp-Exing and redrawing the child's features until they looked Anglo-Saxon. It was dumb, and it ended up spoiling a first-rate

illustration; I was just back from travelling the Ruta Maya on honeymoon, and Russ's first version of the picture had perfectly captured the faces of happy Maya kids at play.

Though most people of Russ's towering talent would be too conceited to rise above such provoking silliness, he was always modest, even-tempered, and gracious. He knew good work from bad far better than most of the people who hired him, and held to his own exacting standards, but he took any requests for changes in his stride. Later he might grumble about it to me, but always with wry amusement rather than rancour. He was a truly lovely man who showed how decent people ought to behave.

Unfailingly warm, generous, kind, and funny, Russ was a great raconteur too, full of fascinating tales of his travels, always interested in people, always open to new experiences, always enthusiastic about creative work, continually ablaze with original ideas. He was a cherished friend and a peerless colleague, and everyone who knew him will miss him.



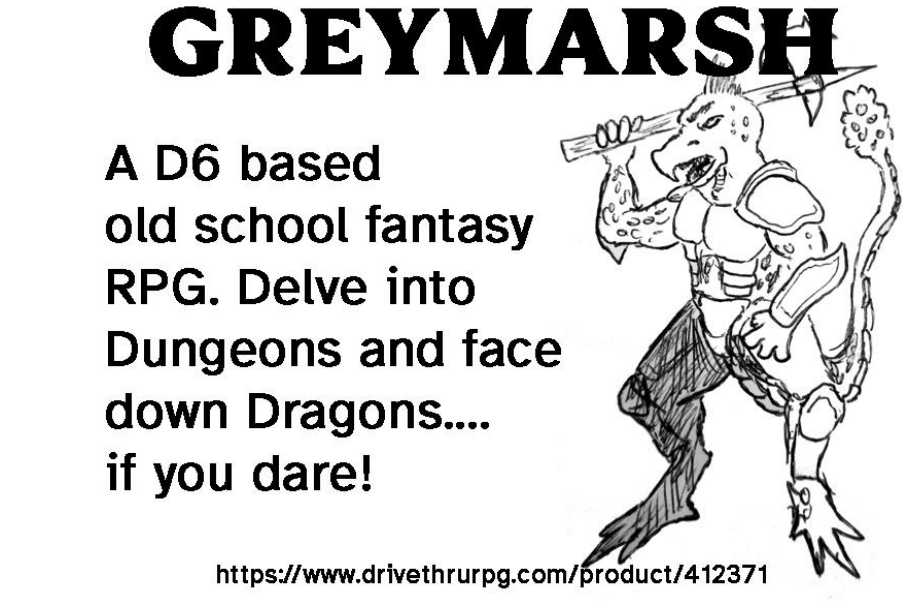
Ring of True Seeing

Chris Jolliffe

The art to creating these marvellous rings has been sadly lost despite their considerable usefulness.

A Ring of True Seeing can take whatever design its creator sees fit but must always feature a closed eye prominent in its design. When a charge is used, the engraved eye opens to reveal a bloodshot and amber-irised eyeball that darts its gaze this way and that, allowing the wearer to see through any illusion to reveal the true nature of what lies beneath. This effect has a range of 30m and is subject to a Spell Expiry Roll.

As with all magic rings, one of these artefacts can hold up to 21 charges and can be recharged by a suitably eminent Sorcerer.



https://www.drivethrurpg.com/product/412371/GreyMarsh

FAQs for Dragon Warriors (Part 2)

Dave Morris (compiled by Brock)

First published by Dave Morris, and reprinted here with his kind permission, are questions asked about the Dragon Warriors game along with his replies. There are a lot of them. This follows on from part 1 in Casket of Fays issue 9.

(12) If a Sorcerer releases a person from their own *Banish* spell, does the person reappear where the *Banish* spell was cast? This is certainly implied for *Banish* spells released by a *Dispel Magic*, but not necessarily clear for the other way of ending the spell.

They reappear at the location they were banished from. It is not a means to sneakily transport a comrade into the queen's bedchamber.

(13) Does the *Mantlet* spell move with the caster after casting, or stay where it was originally cast?

It moves with the caster.

(14) Does the caster need to know precisely where the victim is to cast the *Dishearten* spell and other similar direct attack spells? If so, how precisely?

You need to see your target fairly clearly in order to cast a spell. If you could point them out, that is enough. Dim lighting won't stop you from pointing someone out, but utter blackness or being 100% hidden behind a

wall would. I can cast *Dishearten* if I can see your arm sticking out from behind a door. I can cast *Dishearten* if I can see you through a hole in the wall. I can't cast the spell if you are 100% hidden behind a solid object.

(15) As a *Sword of Damocles* becomes solid when activated, why wouldn't it be stopped by a shield placed between it and the character's head?

Because it is magic, it is mysterious and powerful and breaks the laws of nature. The sword is just too strong to be stopped.

(16) *Evil Eye* – why do the effects from loss of binocular vision in this spell not match effects from loss of binocular vision in permanent injuries tables?

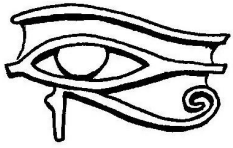
The effects are not identical, just similar.

(17) *Suspended Animation* – can a Mystic end this spell early?

Yes.

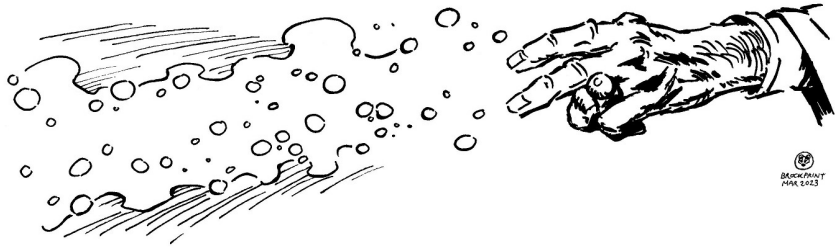
(18) How does the *Pursuit* spell work? Does the Mystic just know the direction of the target once the spell is cast, wherever they are, or do they need to start from a location the person was at and track their path from there?

You need to track their path from a location, passing objects they touched etc. It's about as accurate as a really good sniffer dog. Otherwise it's too easy to follow folks.



(19) Is the Mystic Blast bolt noticeable as an energy bolt? Or is it invisible, since it is a psychic force bolt and thus not noticeable? Same question for *Thunderclap*.

Mystic Blast and Thunderclap are not visible but the direction they come is usually pretty obvious. A logical guess at the point of origin could be made.



(20) What are the scores for the different swarms an air Elementalist can summon with Host of the Air?

For a swarm of insects, the smallest category of swarm as outlined under killer bees should be used. If a flight of birds of prey are summoned, this should consist of 8 birds with the following statistics:

ATTACK 11	Peck (d2,1)
DEFENCE 9	Armour Factor 0
MAGICAL DEFENCE 2	Movement 2m (Flying – 25m)
Health Points 1	STEALTH 16
Rank-Equivalent 1	PERCEPTION 16 (normal)

(21) Can a sorcerer move or defend while casting a spell?

The caster cannot move. The rules describe what can be done in a round on page 71. The only action that can be taken after moving (a quarter of maximum distance) is a melee attack. The caster can defend as normal.

Talking with Damian

Damian May

This issue we talk with Damian May. This is a name that has a long and storied history. I well remember his work under one or two of his nom-de-plumes back in the early days of Dragon Warriors online activity. Anyways, enough from me. Over to…

Tell us one or two lines about who you are.
Decidedly average in all ways gubba bloke from rural South Australia.

Those aliases? What's a Bulya? What's a Pontianak? (Unless you're in Witness Protection, and, then, forget I asked)
Bulya is a Noongar word for Sorcery and the name of an old Red Talon Werewolf the Apocalypse character of mine. Pontianak is both a town near where my wife is from and a spirit similar to a Kuntilanak, a vampiric spirit of the Malaysian-Indonesian archipelago.

What was your first experience with Dragon Warriors? The why; the where; the how.
Picked it up in a newsagent that no longer exists in Port Lincoln while doing my weekly trawl for novels….or at least that is my recollection of memories from when I was 10. Ran it for my brothers.

Where did you go from there? The 80's, 90's, and so on. Did you leave DW awhile and come back, or have you been here all along?
RPG-wise I went to Shadowrun next and then into World of Darkness where Werewolf the Apocalypse became my mainstay for many decades, but Dragon Warriors was not forgotten and was my go to for fantasy RPGs until today.

Tell us about a memorable character you've played or that someone has played in one of your games.

Caith Cernach was a PC in my long…long…. running Glissom: Dark Heritage Campaign. She went from scarred and desperate member of an exiled Clan to a married, accomplished Hedge Witch who saved Glissom and likely all Albion and beyond from the rise of Balor.

What's your favourite DW scenario?

Hmmm…. hard one. I've been very impressed by all of Kieran Turley's scenarios[1], but my favourite would probably be one of Shaun Hately's, which I can't recall the name of currently[2], mainly because I got to play it in person…which is a very rare phenomenon for myself.

How did you get involved with the Wiki, the Drag Wars mailing list, and Ordo Draconis[3]?

That's a good question…which I don't know the answer to. I had been running a few Dragon Warriors PbPs over the years and I guess I ran across the Yahoo mailing list and made connections with other folks there. I know I was a very loud and annoying voice in Dragon Warriors favour on quite a few rpg forums over the years so I think I made a few more contacts there as well….finding folks like Shaun, Ian, Kieran, Jon[4] etc.

[1] https://www.drivethrurpg.com/product/120355/The-Millers-Tale, https://www.drivethrurpg.com/product/132843/The-Knights-Tale, https://www.drivethrurpg.com/product/195325/The-Reeves-Tale.

[2] The Fall of Erincastra, perhaps.

[3] https://www.drivethrurpg.com/product/79261/Ordo-Draconis-2

[4] Shaun Hately from Ambula In Fabulam (also a Red Ruin contributor), Ian Sturrock of Serpent King Games, Kieran Turley (SKG author), and Jon Hodgson (Dragon Warriors cover artist).

What was it like working on published Dragon Warriors books[5]? Which of those is your favourite?

Amazing. Kinda unbelievable really and I still have a hard time believing it. It was a great opportunity. I think the 'Players Guide' contains the material I'm most proud of but 'Fury of the Deep' was lots of fun to write with Jon Reed and 'Friends or Foes' was kinda my foot in the door.

Other DW resources – any recommendations?

The Cobwebbed Forest[6] is the main resource these days, though Library of Hiabuor[7] has good stuff as well.

What does Legend hold for you in the future, and what do you hope for Legend in the future? Tell us a little about the dozen or so projects you mention below.

I'm unsure. I'm very happy to still be contributing to fan works like Casket of Fays and the dozen or so projects that are yet to see the light of day. I don't really follow much of the official news anymore except that which comes through Ian and don't have much interest in the Blood Sword project or Jewelspider. But as long as we're allowed to make fan works I'll be there.

In terms of projects I'm at various stages from barely begun to almost complete on a few Dragon Warriors fan books including The Thousand Islands, Ferromaine, Chapelstone (An Outremer City), Thuland, A Kurlish Nightmare and a couple of very rough sketches of adventure scenarios based in some of the more distant Lands of Legend.

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[5] https://www.drivethrurpg.com/product/178062/Cold-Fury, https://www.drivethrurpg.com/product/93970/Friends-or-Foes, https://www.drivethrurpg.com/product/93971/Fury-of-the-Deep, https://www.drivethrurpg.com/product/141930/Dragon-Warriors-Players-Guide

[6] https://cobwebbedforest.co.uk/

[7] http://www.libraryofhiabuor.net/

The Thousand Islands project is, at least partially, tied to my personal project to translate the Dragon Warriors Corebook into Bahasa Indonesia and to further explore the land and culture that my better half grew up in.

Most of my current, 14, PbPs are 5e simply due to the ease of finding players but I do hope to start up some Werewolf the Apocalyspse and Dragon Warriors PbPs again come Winter.

Shaun Hately (left) and Damian May play what might be ‘The Fall of Erincastra’

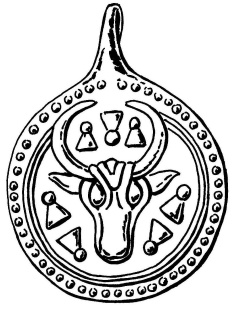
Hudristania

Paul Partington

From ‘A Brief History of Hudristania’ by Marek Groza

‘Over a thousand years ago the lands of what would become Hudristania were ruled by a number of fiercely independent tribes. The region's rugged terrain allowed them to resist being directly ruled by the powerful city states of Emphidor to the north, or by the Kaikuhuran Empire to the south. All that ended when Selentium's legions swept through from the east, and Hudristania became part of the mighty empire - at least until the empire collapsed. The lands of Hudristania fractured into several different kingdoms, each ruled over separately by independent warlords. Although threats came from the south, the mountainous landscape of Hudristania, together with the ruthless efficiency and tenacious defence mounted by Hudristanian forces, prevented any successful invasions.’

From ‘Paganism to the True Faith’ by Miruna Lansten



‘Before the coming of the True Faith, the people of Hudristania worshipped several pagan gods. Dedicated students of history might still find shrines to these false idols around Hudristania.’

‘The god of the sky and father of the gods was Isten, who lived amongst the branches of the Tree of Life. The goddess of the moon and fertility was Istenanya, who helped women during childbirth. The goddess of wind and rain was Szelanya. Szelanya lived in a cave at the top of the mountains and was worshipped particularly by Solomonars, the wizards of Hudristania who controlled the weather. The god of war, fire and blacksmiths was Hadur, who wore armour of magically infused copper.’

‘Hudristania converted to the True Faith when Saint Ladislau came to bring the word of God. The kings of Hudristania at first denied his teachings, but when King Mihail witnessed the priest defeat a vampire in single combat, they started to relent. As Saint Ladislau continued his work, bringing peace to areas blighted by creatures of the night, all the kingdoms eventually converted to the True Faith.’

From ‘A Brief History of Hudristania’ by Marek Groza

‘Hudristania became a united country in 937AS when the most powerful of the warlords, the voivode Radu, began a campaign that gradually subsumed the other kingdoms. He first invaded the neighbouring land of King Gyula, who had killed Radu’s brother. As an example to others, Gyula and his family were nailed to trees and disembowelled. The kings of other lands could either surrender or die in a similar manner, and so Hudristania eventually came under the rule of King Radu.’

‘The current king, Béla II, rules his fractious nobles through fear and might. Despite this, family ties, grudges and superstitions are strong, and each noble watches his neighbours for the first sign of weakness. Petty feuds and raids are common, often supported by claims of acting against witchcraft or devil worship.’

From ‘Paganism to the True Faith’ by Miruna Lansten

‘When Saint Waltar came to Hudristanina he found that although the True Faith was widespread, there were still pockets of pagans who worshipped the old gods of Hudristania. On his travels he found a temple to the war god Hadur and discovered it was a den of vileness and corruption. He entered the temple and spoke vehemently to the pagans about faith, and many wept to see such dedication.’

‘The priest of Hadur was a violent sorcerer and would brook no such talk and so an epic battle broke out between Waltar and the priest. Such was the power wielded by the two that the earth shook and much of the temple collapsed. The priest was eventually defeated, but Waltar was grievously wounded. He died on the banks of the River Cortry, where an abbey was built to house his remains.’

Excerpts from ‘Travels in Hudristania’ by Sorina Taltos

‘I first entered Hudristania by traversing a mountain pass. It became bitterly cold as I ascended, which came as a shock after the warmer climes from the west. As the land opened up before me, I saw vast forests of conifers, bleak moorland and scrubby fields in which grim looking peasants toiled. As night fell, I heard the howling of wolves and made haste to the nearest hostelry.’

‘Before me I saw a hovel, shrouded in mist. Its roof was sagging and the walls were mildewed and ran with a dark viscous liquid. Plants in the garden were diseased specimens with a vile miasma hanging around them. I turned away from the rotten edifice, but as I did so the door creaked open. In the doorway stood a kindly old lady, her appearance completely at odds with her abode. She called me over in a pleasant manner but I knew better than to linger here and escaped back the way I came.’ [8]

‘I set up camp in the remains of an old house, its roof long gone and its walls barely chest height. As I was tending the fire, I heard a low moan from the corner of the room. A vision of horror appeared before me;, a dishevelled woman covered in blood. 'Where is my baby?' she whispered. Before I could collect my wits, she had vanished. I was too tired to move, and so rested uneasily during the night. In the morning, while collecting my equipment, I found the bones of a very small child scattered about. I buried them and uttered a short prayer before moving on.’

[8] Sorina might have encountered an annis, which is described in Casket of Fays issue 8.

‘As night drew in I came to an enchanted glade in the middle of the forest. In the glade were luminous figures, beautiful young women who danced naked in the moonlight. As enraptured as I was, I knew that if they saw me watching them that death would be my reward, so with great regret I slipped away. I still see them in my dreams.’ [9]

‘I first met the Lady Katerina Holzt as I was travelling to Inistrare. She was the most beautiful creature I had ever seen. She invited me to dine with her in her home, and like a fool I accepted. During my stay with her, she gave me everything I desired, but took all that I valued. I only just escaped with my sanity but would give anything to gaze upon her face once more.’ [10]

[9] These spirits are Iele, who delight in dancing around lakes and in forests. However, if they are seen dancing (compare STEALTH with a PERCEPTION of 12), then they will cast a hex on those who watch them. Treat this as a MAGICAL ATTACK of 20, which if successful, results in the onlooker being cursed (use the rulebook page 123 for the effects). Iele can only be harmed by exorcism.

[10] Lady Katerina Holzt and the town of Inistrare will be detailed more fully in the solo gamebook Lair of the Vampire.

Ferryman

Chris Jolliffe

It is known that to cross the river of the dead one must pay a toll to a ferryman, who will take you to the far side from which there is no return. Sometimes these grim boatmen do not wait for the dead to arrive, and instead wait by the water's edge in mortal lands.

A Ferryman will appear much as any other boatman offering transit across a river or lake. Their features are usually half-concealed by a hooded cloak such as many outdoors folk might wear, and their voice will be dry and toneless. Their vessel will look much as any local ferry, albeit rather old and often bearing some subtle decoration relating to death, for example a bone motif, black or white roses or lilies, but this may not be immediately obvious (roll 3d6 vs Intelligence). His vessel carries up to three passengers.

The Ferryman will hold out his pale hand for payment – always in silver, always two coins per traveller. He will refuse any other offer, and his vessel will remain otherwise immobile.

If anyone attempts to strike or harm the Ferryman, or board his boat without permission, the attack will miss as boat and boatman fade to nothing, only to reappear in an instant some twenty feet or so across the water. He will raise a finger and point, then disappear again. His attacker then suffers a death-curse with a MAGICAL ATTACK of 3d10; if they succumb, the ferryman will reappear ready to take them across in his customary grim role.

Anyone paying the ferryman is quite literally on their way to death. If the vessel reaches the far side, anyone on the boat will die, and their bodies will fall to the ground on the far shore.

Only on board the boat can the Ferryman be fought, and the narrow confines will make this a difficult contest. Only the person nearest can fight him directly, and there will be no room for lengthy weapons such as polearms or two-handed swords. Anyone else on the vessel may assist only with spells; even missile weapons would be impossible to employ. Any attempt at combat also requires a 3d6 vs Reflexes roll for each attack; if this is failed, the attacker falls overboard, suffering the same 3d10 death curse. If they survive this, they may strike for the shore but will always find themselves back on the original side, no matter how close the other shore might have been.

The Ferryman attacks by drawing the life force from their victim with an outstretched hand, like a Sorcerer's *Inflict Wound* [11] spell If the Ferryman is defeated, he will disappear, and the boat will bring them safely to the far shore. Waiting for them will be a pile of silver, the Ferryman's takings, amounting to 2d100 Florins.

FERRYMAN

ATTACK	n/a	Life stealing, 5 HP
DEFENCE	10	
MAGICAL ATTACK	20	
MAGICAL DEFENCE	8	
EVASION	3	
STEALTH	n/a	
PERCEPTION[12]	16	

Health Points 20 +1d6
AF 0; immune to non-magical weapons
Rank equivalence: 6th

[11] See Sorcerer spell description in the Dragon Warriors rulebook, p. 80.
[12] Panoptical

The Grimoire of Albus Gwydion

Chris Jolliffe

Albus was a sorcerer of a past generation (some say many generations) who termed himself a 'Vivimancer', a specialist in the arcane arts of healing and defying death. His grimoire now resides under lock and key in the arcane library at Cantorbridge with study reserved for only the most eminent magicians and sages, at least officially. By repute, the Custodian cannot be bribed but may exchange access for the recovery of rare tomes.

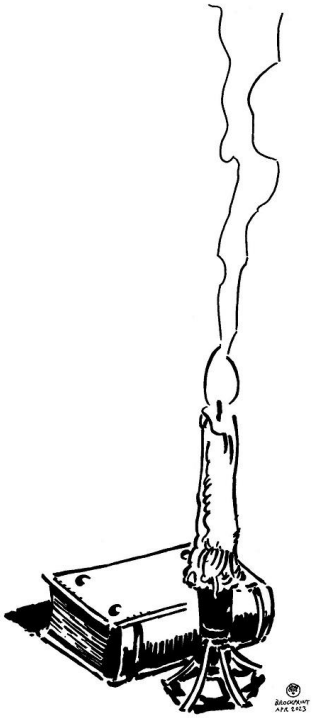
The Grimoire is notoriously poorly written, full of scribbled notes and diagrams and a peculiar shorthand. Learning any of the spells within takes twice as long as normal, and requires a successful Intelligence roll at (3d6 + spell rank). Failing this wastes the entire time spent, requiring the student to start from the beginning again.

Spells

Benefactor
Level: 2
Range: 3m
Duration: Spell Expiry Roll applies

With this spell active, the sorcerer can transfer one Health Point from themselves to a single recipient within 3m, and may continue to do so once per round to the same or other recipient until spell expiry. Typically, the sorcerer will pause every now and then to heal themselves.

Lifeforce
Level: 3
Range: touch
Duration: Spell Expiry Roll applies
This spell imbues the recipient with a store of supernatural healing, adding 4 Health Points to their current and maximum Health Point scores. The effect is subject to a Spell Expiry Roll, after which the recipient loses the bonus Health Points (which if they are at very low Health Points could be dangerous). A recipient can only benefit from one such charm at a time.



Beneficent Ally
Level: 5
Range: touch
Duration: Spell Expiry Roll applies

This spell requires the caster to nominate a recipient and a donor. For the duration of the spell, the donor can choose to take any wound inflicted on the recipient upon themselves, until the spell expires.

Soul Vessel
Level: 8
Range: touch
Duration: until activated

The sorcerer can construct an effigy or picture of the recipient, imbued with charms and preparations costing 500 Florins and 1 Health Point from the recipient, which they do not regain unless the spell completes with a successful resurrection. This effigy is usually kept in a safe location or carried by the sorcerer.

If the recipient is killed (the spell has no effect on natural death, such as disease or old age) their soul is transferred into the vessel, enabling spells such as Resurrection to be cast even if the body cannot be recovered. Of course, there needs to be a body prepared for inhabitation…

If the soul is not brought back or transferred somehow within a month, it is lost.

Vessel of Flesh
Level: 10
Range: touch
Duration: until used

This allows the caster to grow a sorcerous and slightly amorphous body for a soul to inhabit. The process takes a month and 500 Gold Crowns, and the unnerving creation is kept in a crystal sarcophagus filled with a singular preserving fluid.

If a soul is brought to the form, typically with an Amulet of Soul Storing or Albus' own Soul Vessel spell, a Resurrection spell will transform into a copy of the revived person's original body. Better yet, this greatly reduces the loss of characteristics – instead of losing 1d3 Health Points and 1 from each Characteristic, they lose 2 permanent Health Points and 1 from Looks.

Naturally, the spell does not recover any possessions.

Kenshi[13]

Wayne Imlach

Here is a simple modification to the basic Knight profession for far eastern style swordsmen (samurai and the like). Note it is designed for 'vanilla' Dragon Warriors.

The signature skill of the Kenshi is the 'Agile Defence' – allowing a seasoned warrior to hold his own even if outnumbered dramatically, though at the expense of wearing the heavier armour of Coradian counterparts.

Attributes & Level Progression.
A Kenshi may wear light armour only – basic AF3 or less (armour penalties as a Mystic).
He starts with the 'Quick Draw' (iaijutsu) special ability at 1st rank in addition to the usual Knight skills.

Agile Defence
The Kenshi may set aside a number of points of defence equal or less than his rank to be applied against every attacking opponent, and may split the remainder against any number of opponents, regardless of numbers or facing.

Example:
A 5th rank Kenshi has a DEFENCE score of 11. He is surrounded by six bandits. He takes 5 points of his DEFENCE and applies it to each of the attacking bandits. With his 6 remaining points of DEFENCE he splits it normally, with 1 additional point to each bandit, for a grand total of 6 DEFENCE against each individual bandit.

[13] You can find this, along with a surfeit of other rules and options, on Wayne's website: https://wimlach.weebly.com/dragon-warriors.html

If the Kenshi applies his entire defence against a single opponent, then that opponent cannot score critical hits with their attack roll – only strikes made with skill and finesse can find their mark against a focused Agile Defence.

Agile Defence can only be used when wearing light armour (normal AF of 3) or less.

Special Abilities
All normal knight special abilities are available to the Kenshi, with the exception of 'Expert Parry' – their combat style and philosophy does not support the refinement of shield techniques.

Kenshi may also choose from the following special abilities:
Arrow Cutting
Fight Blind
Unarmed Combat
These are exactly as the Warlock special abilities of the same name.

Kensei
When the Kenshi has acquired the following five special abilities (minimum 12th rank), they may attempt to attain Adepthood (see Mystic) and become a Kensei, or ‘sword saint’.

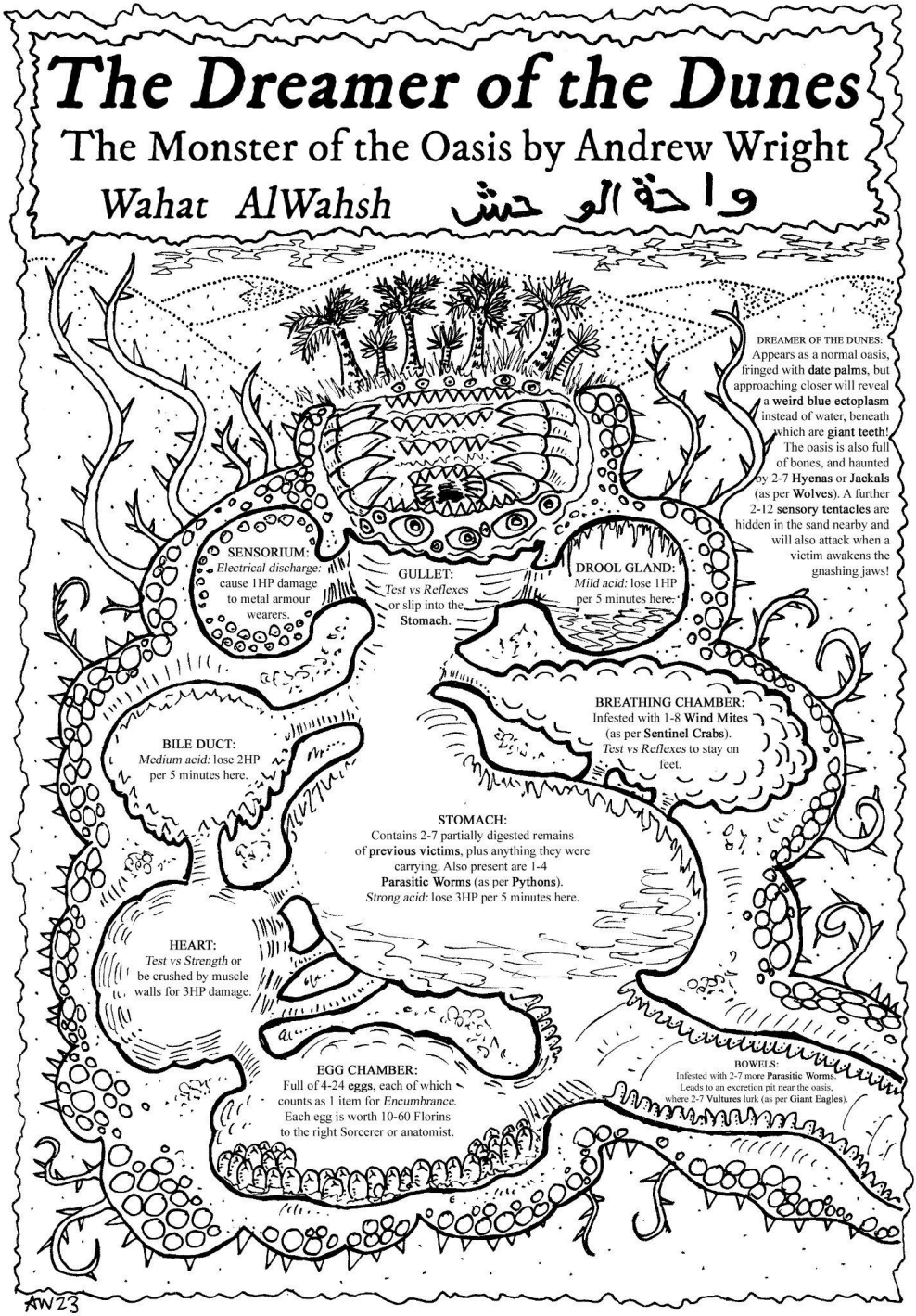
Swordmaster
Weaponskill: sword
Disarm Technique
Main Gauche (nitojutsu)
Fight Blind

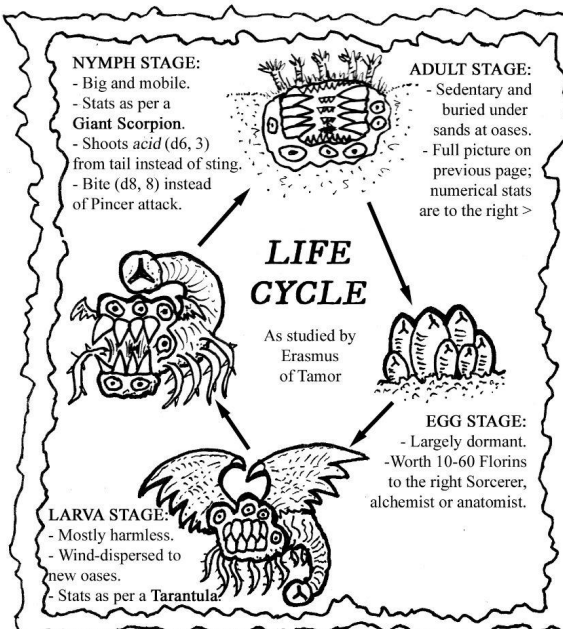
Kensei Adepthood is treated exactly as the Mystic ability, and provides the same characteristic changes and additional powers.

The Dreamer of the Dunes

The Monster of the Oasis by Andrew Wright

Wahat AlWahsh واحة الوحش


DREAMER OF THE DUNES:
Appears as a normal oasis, fringed with **date palms**, but approaching closer will reveal a **weird blue ectoplasm** instead of water, beneath which are **giant teeth!** The oasis is also full of bones, and haunted by 2-7 **Hyenas** or **Jackals** (as per **Wolves**). A further 2-12 **sensory tentacles** are hidden in the sand nearby and will also attack when a victim awakens the gnashing jaws!
SENSORIUM:
Electrical discharge: cause 1HP damage to metal armour wearers.
GULLET:
Test vs Reflexes or slip into the **Stomach.**
DROOL GLAND:
Mild acid: lose 1HP per 5 minutes here.
BREATHING CHAMBER:
Infested with 1-8 **Wind Mites** (as per **Sentinel Crabs**).
Test vs Reflexes to stay on feet.
BILE DUCT:
Medium acid: lose 2HP per 5 minutes here.
STOMACH:
Contains 2-7 partially digested remains of **previous victims**, plus anything they were carrying. Also present are 1-4 **Parasitic Worms** (as per **Pythons**).
Strong acid: lose 3HP per 5 minutes here.
HEART:
Test vs Strength or be crushed by muscle walls for 3HP damage.
EGG CHAMBER:
Full of 4-24 **eggs**, each of which counts as 1 item for *Encumbrance*. Each egg is worth 10-60 Florins to the right Sorcerer or anatomist.
BOWELS:
Infested with 2-7 more **Parasitic Worms**.
Leads to an excretion pit near the oasis, where 2-7 **Vultures** lurk (as per **Giant Eagles**).
AW23


NYMPH STAGE:
- Big and mobile.
- Stats as per a **Giant Scorpion**.
- Shoots *acid* (d6, 3) from tail instead of sting.
- Bite (d8, 8) instead of Pincer attack.
ADULT STAGE:
- Sedentary and buried under sands at oases.
- Full picture on previous page; numerical stats are to the right >
LIFE CYCLE
As studied by Erasmus of Tamor
EGG STAGE:
- Largely dormant.
-Worth 10-60 Florins to the right Sorcerer, alchemist or anatomist.
LARVA STAGE:
- Mostly harmless.
- Wind-dispersed to new oases.
- Stats as per a **Tarantula**.

THE DREAMER OF THE DUNES

ATTACK 25, Bite (d12, 8),
also 2-12 Tentacles (d6, 4, 10HP each)
DEFENCE 15
MAGICAL DEFENCE 10
Health Points 4d6 +40
Rank-equivalent: 17th
AF 4
Movement: 0m (0m)
EVASION 0
STEALTH 5
PERCEPTION 14

Notes: The Dreamer of the Dunes is a gargantuan ambush predator that lurks at oases from the Azure Coast to the Kaikuhuran Desert. Known as *Wahat AlWahsh* by the Badawin nomads, these creatures consume anything that comes within range: camels, antelope, donkeys, goats, baboons, and of course people.

On a roll of 1 or 2, the creature has swallowed its victim; they take damage as per normal and are deposited in the creature's stomach. Intriguingly, the internal organs of the beast are mildly bio-luminescent; some scholars consider this evidence that marine versions of the monster are also likely to exist.

ADVENTURE SEED: Sayfuldin the Shadow, renegade Marijah Assassin from Hakbad, has thrown his lot in with the **Cultists of the Goddess of Ebon Annihilation**, recent arrivals from Zinj, to the east. In a bid to start a low-level turf war with the Marijahs across the backstreets of **Hakbad**, the Cultists paid Sayfuldin to steal the **formulas** of many of the **Marijah's alchemical compounds**. The thief succeeded, and fled Hakbad, travelling across the desert for a rendezvous at the **Oasis of Khatar**, a noted place of ill-repute (and thus quiet).

Unfortunately, both Sayfuldin and the Cultist's agent have since disappeared and the PCs have been hired by the Cultists to travel to the oasis and find out what has happened. (The Cultists themselves cannot leave the city for fear of rousing suspicion, and it would weaken their numbers somewhat). Of course, the Oasis of Khatar is actually **a Dreamer of the Dunes**, and both Sayfuldin and the Cultists agent may be found within the beast's vast internal tract. It is up to the GM to decide exactly the whereabouts of the two and whether they are dead or alive. Meanwhile, the **Marijah Assassins** have discovered the theft and sent their own team of specialists to the oasis to capture Sayfuldin and recover the stolen formulas.

Complicating matters further is the fact the oasis (owing to its monstrous inhabitant) is scried upon regularly by a cell of **Fire Magi of Faresh**, who have also embarked on a mission there to investigate all the activity, led by the noted adventurer, **Mhysse of Chaubrette** (see *Friends or Foes*, p. 39)! How the PCs navigate all this internecine carnage while also dealing with the Dreamer of the Dunes and its attendant symbiotes and parasites, is entirely up to them. They may play it straight and recapture Sayfuldin and the formulas for the Cultists, or they may ransom them back to the Marijahs to curry favour with the more powerful sect, or they may even keep the formulas for themselves!

Note: The Dreamer of the Dunes first appeared in 1985, in the fifth *Golden Dragon* gamebook, *Curse of the Pharaoh* by Oliver Johnson, where it was called the Oasis Monster.

AW23

Stealing the Enchanted Blade

Mark Dowson

This adventure is suitable for a 4th Rank character.

1. Breathing hard with your weapon at the ready, looking at the corridor ahead, you reassure yourself that the enchanted blade must be kept somewhere around here. You have looked pretty much everywhere else, and the guards have been alerted to your presence. Turn to **2**.

2. Down the corridor, you reach a junction. To go left, turn to **8**. To go right, turn to **12**. To go back the way you have come, turn to **19**.

3. To go down the corridor facing you, turn to **19**. To go down the corridor to your left, turn to **12**. To go down the corridor to your right, turn to **8**.

4. You slot the key into the lock and turn it, push the door open. In the small chamber beyond you see a longsword hung on the wall facing you. You waste no time in going over to it and grabbing the weapon. It feels very well balanced and gives you a +2 bonus to ATTACK, DEFENCE, Armour Bypass Roll and damage! Turn to **14**.

5. On reaching a junction, you see a guard coming down the corridor to your right and you are forced to turn and face him. Turn to **6**.

6. The guard draws his sword to attack.
ATT 12 Sword (d8, 4 points), DEF 7, AF 3, MAG DEF 3, EV 4, HP 10, Rank 1
If you defeat him, turn to **3**. If you are defeated, turn to **22**.

7. Along the corridor you reach a junction, where you see a guard coming down the corridor to your left and you are forced to turn and face him. Turn to **6**.

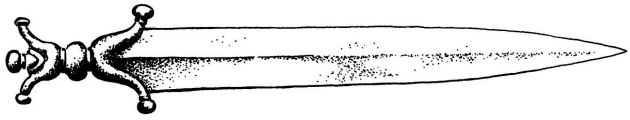
8. The corridor ends with a door in the wall to your left, where you can smell food, and another in the wall to your right with a guard outside it. The guard raises his sword to attack.
ATT 12 Sword (d8, 4 points), DEF 7, AF 3, MAG DEF 3, EV 4, HP 10, Rank 1
If you defeat the guard, turn to **18**. If you are defeated, turn to **22**.

9. The last guard falls to the floor. You are breathing hard from the adrenalin and all the parrying and dodging. To go through the door at the end of the corridor facing you, which leads to outside, turn to **26**. To go through a door to your right, where you can smell food, turn to **24**. To go down the corridor behind you, turn to **2**.

10. Through the door you see a bed chamber. To risk taking the time to thoroughly search the room, turn to **23**. To leave by the door behind you, turn to **17**.

11. If you do not have the enchanted blade, turn to **13**. If you do have it, turn to **14**.

12. The corridor you are in ends in a door with a guard outside it, who draws his sword on seeing you.
ATT 12 Sword (d8, 4 points), DEF 7, AF 3, MAG DEF 3, EV 4, HP 10, Rank 1
If you defeat him, turn to **15**. If you are defeated, turn to **22**.



13. You find the door is locked and is plainly too tough for you to break down. If you have a brass key, turn to **4**. If you do not have one, unable to get the door open, turn to **14**.

14. Turning away from the door, you look back along the corridor stretching to your right. To go along the corridor, turn to **7**. To turn back to the door behind you, turn to **11**.

15. To go through the door at the end of the corridor, turn to **11**. To go back the way you have come, turn to **7**.

16. Through the door you step out into a corridor stretching to your right with a door in the wall facing you. To go through the door, turn to **10**. To go along the corridor, turn to **5**. To return through the door behind you, turn to **25**.

17. Through the door you step out into a corridor stretching to your left. There is a door in the wall facing you, where you can smell food. To go through it, turn to **25**. To go along the corridor, turn to **5**. To return through the door behind you, turn to **10**.

18. To go through the door to your left, where you can smell food, turn to **25**. To go through the door to your right, turn to **10**. To return along the corridor behind you, turn to **5**.

19. You have not gone far along the corridor before you run into two guards. Turn to **20**.

20. The two guards draw their swords to attack you.
ATT 12 Sword (d8, 4 points), DEF 7, AF 3, MAG DEF 3, EV 4, HP 8, Rank 1
If you defeat them, turn to **9**. If you are defeated, turn to **22**.

21. Through the door you enter a corridor stretching to your left and right. To your right, two guards step into view, forcing you to turn and face them. Turn to **20**.

22. Your current opponent plunges his sword into your chest, and you fall to the ground, dead.

The End

23. Under a pillow you find a brass key. This you take. Leaving by the door behind you, turn to **17**.

24. Through the door you enter a hall with several rows of tables with chairs along them. Beyond them is the door to the kitchen, you suspect from the heat coming from it. In the air is a faint smell of ale and meat. At the far end, to your right, is a door. To go through it, turn to **16**. To return through the door behind you, turn to **21**.

25. Through the door you enter a hall with several rows of tables with chairs along them. To your right is the door to the kitchen, you suspect from the heat coming from it. In the air is the faint smell of ale and meat. At the far end of the wall to your left is a door. To go through it, turn to **21**. To return through the door behind you, turn to **16**.

26. Through the door you make your escape into the darkness of the night outside. If you have the enchanted blade, then you have won. If not, then you have at least survived to fight another day.

The End